

The Cambridge Sub Regional Housing Market Assessment

What is a Housing Market Assessment?

A housing assessment is a collection of data and survey information about all parts of the housing market in a particular area. It helps:

- Develop a long-term view of housing need and demand to inform planning policies, such as regional spatial strategies and regional housing strategies.
- Develop a sound approach to planning for the mix of different sizes and types of households in a market area.
- Identify a required level of affordable housing and decide how evidence of housing need translates into different sizes and types of affordable housing.
- Make decisions on issues like social housing allocation priorities, private sector renewal options and the valuation of new-build home ownership schemes such as shared ownership.
- Build an understanding of the different housing markets operating in a geographic area.
- Strengthen the links between housing demand and land availability, though use of strategic Land Availability Assessments.

Why do one?

Building sustainable communities

We want to understand our housing markets, so we can deliver decent homes for all sections of the community, creating new places people value and can afford in the long term. The Housing Market Assessment will guide investment in all types of new homes and help plan attractive new communities.

Powerful evidence

An Assessment will provide powerful evidence for planning and prioritising, and to build on in future. Commissioning it will build knowledge into our partnerships and provide the foundations of information to be used, added to, refined, updated and reviewed in years to come, feeding in to our planning and housing strategies. A strong evidence base enables us to benchmark, monitor, share data and identify good practice, innovations and efficiencies with others.

Working together

We want to make the Assessment useful to as many different partners and stakeholders as possible, by sharing its aims and involving others in the research and its outputs, so we use and share the benefits as widely as possible and provide best value across all agendas.

A sub-regional housing market assessment should...

- Estimate housing need and demand for both affordable and market housing.
- Determine how the distribution of need and demand varies across the plan area, for example between the urban and rural areas.
- Identify the particular accommodation needs and demands of specific groups, such as key workers, homeless households, Black and Minority Ethnic groups, first time buyers, students, people with disabilities, older people and Gypsies and Travellers.

What is a housing sub region?

Housing sub regions are groups of local authorities working together to address housing issues and bid for resources. The Cambridge sub region is one of nine housing sub-regions in the East of England, and is made up of seven district councils:

- Cambridge City
- East Cambridgeshire
- Fenland
- Forest Heath
- Huntingdonshire
- St Edmundsbury
- South Cambridgeshire.

Who will lead this project?

The Cambridge sub-region local authorities meet monthly as a social housing group, known as CRASH. The meeting addresses the supply and management of social and affordable housing, and all matters connected with this, across the sub-region. It includes senior representatives from each of the seven councils, together with Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridgeshire Horizons, GO-East, the Housing Corporation and National Housing Federation. CRASH is supported by topic groups, which progress specific housing issues.

The Government's key objectives for housing

The Government's key objective is "to ensure that everyone has the opportunity of living in a decent home, which they can afford, in a community where they want to live" by seeking to:

- Ensure a wide choice of affordable and market housing is available, to meet the needs of all members of the community.
- Deliver a better balance between housing demand and supply in every housing market and improve affordability where necessary.
- Create sustainable, inclusive, mixed communities. Developments should be attractive and safe - designed and built to a high quality. They should be located in areas with good access to jobs, key services and infrastructure.

Regional planning bodies and local planning authorities aim to meet the Government's objectives in regional spatial strategies and local development documents, and through individual planning decisions.

Guidance on Assessments

In 2005 the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM, now Communities and Local Government department or CLG) published draft guidance on Housing Market Assessments. This sets out how to:

- Identify the key objectives of the assessment and the assessment methods to be used.
- Assess the function and structure of current housing markets, including existing housing demand.
- Estimate changes in household numbers in order to identify future housing demand.
- Estimate current and future levels of housing need.
- Consider intermediate housing and the demands of particular household groups, and
- Bring together the findings of the assessment - what constitutes a robust assessment, the need to monitor and update assessment findings and transitional issues.

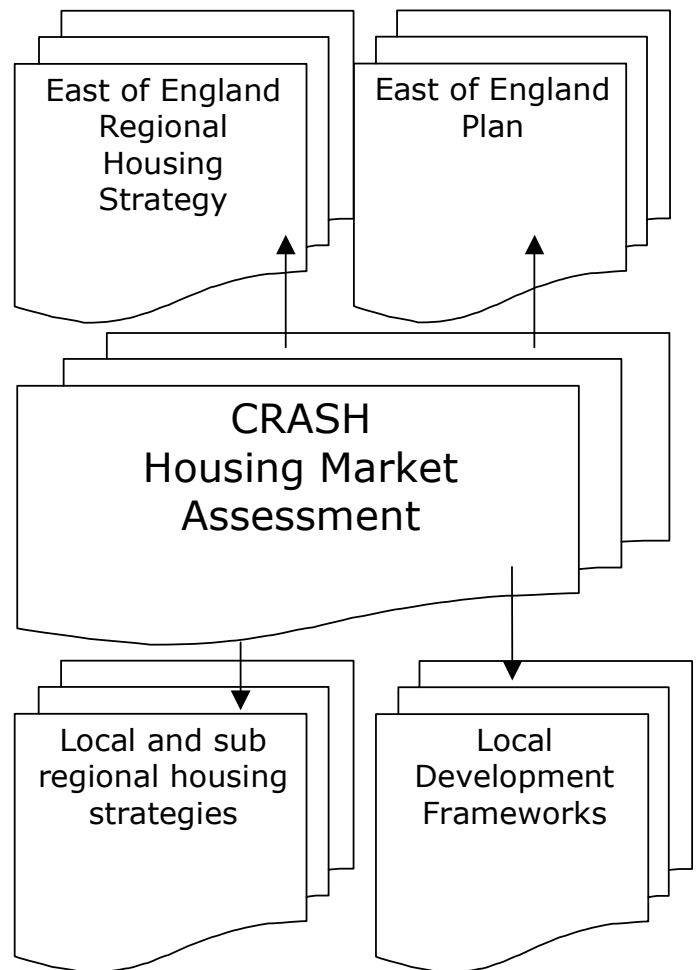
Regional Spatial Strategies

The East of England Plan is our region's spatial strategy. To summarise, it sets out the East of England's approach to:

- The level of housing provision for 15 to 20 years, across the East of England region, within each sub-regional housing market area and within each local planning authority.
- Sub-regional housing market areas, reflecting their market circumstances and arrangements to manage the release of land.
- Brownfield and density targets.
- Meeting affordable housing needs, including an affordable housing target across the region and for each housing sub-region.
- An appropriate mix of household types to meet need and demand.
- Meeting rural housing needs, including affordable housing.
- Provision for Gypsies and Travellers, following guidance in the forthcoming Planning Circular *Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites*.

If you want to see the full document (bearing in mind it is not finalised yet), the East of England Plan can be found at

<http://www.eera.gov.uk/category.asp?cat=120>



Outputs

The government's draft guidance explains how local authorities can develop a good understanding of how their housing markets operate. Reflecting the objectives and approach set out in planning guidance called Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) it helps local authorities and their stakeholders plan for housing in sub-regional housing market areas.

It also enables authorities to obtain reliable figures for housing need and demand and to determine what this means for the provision of both market and affordable housing. It allows them to develop a good understanding of housing markets, their characteristics and the drivers of market change.

To see PPS3 go to: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1504592>

To see "Delivering Affordable Housing" guidance, go to:
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1504795>

How are we planning to do the work in the CRASH sub region?

The CRASH team has agreed to work together to undertake our housing market assessment. However we are very keen to involve our partners across the sub region to make sure the work is useful to all of us, and reflects the wealth of knowledge and understanding of housing and related issues for our area.

Cambridgeshire County Research Group brings the necessary, relevant research and statistical expertise to the project. Research and intelligence expertise is essential, particularly with regard to the maintenance, development and interpretation of basic information, which requires a degree of continuity of investment and specialist knowledge. As well as the County Research Group, we will also look to commission new research where it is needed.

Working together – who?

The guidance says that working under the leadership of an appropriate body, the housing market partnership should be a multi-disciplinary team including housing, planning, and economic development and regeneration.

Core members should be representatives from:

- Local authorities and county councils
- Housing Corporation
- Regional housing boards/regional planning bodies
- Registered social landlords
- Research and intelligence experts

Other organisations with relevant market or statistical expertise, for example

- Housebuilders
- Government Offices
- English Partnerships
- Local strategic partnerships
- Regional development agencies

Other members could include

- Private sector partners and estate agents
- Lenders
- Education and health authority representatives
- Transport and regeneration agencies.

So far a small project team has been meeting to get things started and to make sure we have sorted out the formalities of working together. We have looked at the guidance and new PPG3, and have created a plan of how to start the HMA off.

What happens once it's completed?

Unlike the housing needs surveys which each local authority used to commission (usually from consultants) every 3 to 5 years, a housing market assessment provides a more permanent "foundation" of information, which is built upon as new data becomes available, such as a new household surveys, a new Census or updated housing price or income information, so the information builds up over time, constantly adding detail and increasing our understanding of the housing market and what affects it.

How will I find out about the results?

This is the first briefing note on the HMA, outlining what it is and why we need to do one. Further notes are planned to keep you informed, which will be published as the project progresses.

Our first event will be in February 2007, where we'd like to get your views on the initial findings from the County Research Team.

Once the initial stage of the Assessment is complete in April 2007 we will share its findings, give opportunities to review and discuss outcomes and plan what to do next, together.

Then periodically the Assessment will be reviewed to see the effects of feeding in new information and how this has affected our housing markets.

What can I do to help?

You can...

- Take part in any events and share your views and experiences – return the slip below.
- Offer to sponsor the research through funding – return the slip below or make contact.
- Help us with questions as they arise – look out for Housing Market Assessment briefing notes and messages.
- Contact us if you have any issues or suggestions about the assessment.

Next steps

- The project team will continue to meet regularly to progress the project and ensure milestones are set and achieved.
- Data will be collected from local authorities and other sources, to form the foundation of the Assessment.
- A workshop will be held in February (see below) to check out early findings with you, our partners, and to gain your perspective on the picture the Assessment is starting to build.
- Research, including interview surveys, will be carried out across the sub region to check out household information in Spring 2007.
- The first stage of the Assessment will be completed in Spring 2007 and will be launched and publicised across the sub region.

Yes! I would like to get involved with the Housing Market Assessment!

- I would like to receive more briefing notes as the project progresses
- I would like to take part in the 7th February workshop – please tick this box and return the form **before 29th January 2007** to book your place
- I cannot attend the workshop but would like to see the feedback

February Workshop

To view the outcomes of the first stage of the review, the wealth of secondary information – and give your reactions and insight to the findings, come along to our Workshop from 9.15 to 12.45 on **Wednesday 7th February** at Buckingham House Conference Centre, Newhall, Cambridge. For a map and directions, go to: <http://www.newhall.cam.ac.uk/contacts/directions/>

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Job title:

Organisation:

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Please add any thoughts, comments or feedback you may have on the HMA at this stage...

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Please return by post, fax or e-mail by 29th January 2007 to

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